

**Thomas Jefferson to Cornelia Jefferson Randolph,  
April 3, 1808, with Postscript Dated April 5, from The  
Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal  
Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO CORNELIA JEFFERSON RANDOLPH<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of Thomas Mann, and Martha (Jefferson) Randolph. She afterwards married Nicholas Phillips Trist.

From Randall's *Life of Jefferson*, III., 634.

Washington, April 3, '08.

My Dear Cornelia, —I have owed you a letter two months, but have had nothing to write about, till last night I found in a newspaper the four lines 28 which I now inclose to you: and as you are learning to write, they would be a good lesson to convince you of the importance of minding your stops in writing. I allow you a day to find out yourself how to read these lines, so far as to make them true. If you cannot do it in that time, you may call in assistance. At the same time, I will give you four other lines, which I learnt when I was but a little older than you, and I still remember.

“ I've seen the sea all in a blaze of fire I've seen a house as high as the moon and higher  
I've seen the sun at twelve o'clock at night I've seen the man who saw this wondrous sight.  
”

All this is true whatever you may think of it at first reading: I mentioned in my letter of last week to Ellen, that I was under an attack of periodical headache. This is the 10th day. It has been very moderate, and yesterday did not last more than three hours. Tell your

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mamma that I fear I shall not get away as soon as I expected. Congress has spent the last five days without employing a single hour in the business necessary to be finished. Kiss her for me, and all the sisterhood. To Jefferson I give my hand, to your papa my affectionate salutations. You have always my love.

Th. Jefferson.

P.S.—April 5. I have kept my letter open till to-day, and am able to say now, that my headache for the last two days has been scarcely sensible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson later wrote to her:

“ Washington, Dec. 26, '08.

“I congratulate you, my dear Cornelia, on having acquired the valuable art of writing. How delightful to be enabled by it to converse with an absent friend, as if present! To this we are indebted for all our reading; because it must be written before we can read it. To this we are indebted for the *Iliad*, the *Ænead*, the *Columbiad*, *Henriad*, *Dunciad*, and now for the most glorious poem of all, the *Terrapiniad*, which I now enclose to you. This sublime poem consigns to everlasting fame the greatest achievement in war ever known to ancient or modern times; in the battle of David and Goliath, the disparity between the combatants was nothing in comparison to our case. I rejoice that you have learnt to write, for another reason; for as that is done with a goose-quill, you now know the value of a goose and of course you will assist Ellen in taking care of the half-dozen very fine grey geese which I shall send by Davy. But as I do this, I must refer to your mamma to decide whether they will be safest at Edgehill or at Monticello till I return home, and to give orders accordingly. I received letters a few days ago from Mr. Bankhead and Anne. They are well. I had expected a visit from Jefferson at Christmas, had there been a sufficient intermission in his lectures. But I suppose there was not, as he is not come. Remember me affectionately to your papa and mamma, and kiss Ellen and all the children for me.

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“P.S. Since writing the above I have a letter from Mr. Peale informing me that Jefferson is well, and saying the best things of him.